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FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6312
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RHMFSS/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE
RHMFSS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 000023

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR AF/E, AF/RSA, AND A/S FRAZER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/03/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [MOPS](#) [SO](#) [ET](#) [KE](#)

SUBJECT: SOMALIA -- OVERVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

REF: A. NAIROBI 05399
[B](#). NAIROBI 05401
[C](#). NAIROBI 05402
[D](#). NAIROBI 05404
[E](#). NAIROBI 05405
[F](#). NAIROBI 05406
[G](#). NAIROBI 05407
[H](#). NAIROBI 05408
[I](#). NAIROBI 00010

Classified By: Ambassador Ranneberger for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[11.](#) (C) Somalis across the spectrum) including TFG officials, members of civil society, the business community, clan elders, and even moderate members of the Islamic Courts) are all telling us that they deeply appreciate the positive role that the U.S. has been playing since the start of the Ethiopian intervention against the Courts. They believe that continued intensive U.S. involvement is crucial to help bring about a broad-based national government and the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the country. Reftels A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H have reported on the Mission's continued close contacts with all these actors.

[12.](#) (C) The TFG is rightly focused on ensuring security. They also completely share our agenda to get the high-value targets and other violent extremists. The Kenyans are cooperating fully with us, The TFG, and the Ethiopians in a maximum effort. Success will greatly enhance the future security of the TFG and contribute to national stability. In the longer term, it is in our interest to seize this opportunity to stabilize Somalia so as to prevent its use as a terrorist refuge and base of operations.

[13.](#) (C) President Yusuf and Prime Minister Gedi are making positive public statements on their commitment to dialogue with all Somalis who renounce violence and terrorism. While there have been a number of TFG discussions with representatives of Somali society, these do not yet appear to be sufficiently high level, representative, wide-ranging or detailed to signal genuine commitment to inclusivity. In addition to the range of cross-clan civil society organizations, clan elders, and traditional religious leaders it will be particularly important for us and the TFG to engage the business community. The business community is very concerned about the potential return to power of the warlords. Convincing them that the TFG can bring order as did the Courts for a time will be key to gaining their support for TFG rule.

[14.](#) (C) Reftel G reports the continued efforts of warlords to regain their former positions. Allowing warlords to reassert some authority would appear to be a tempting means of quickly reasserting control from the TFG and Ethiopian perspective)

perhaps with the intention of dealing with the warlord problem at some stage further down the road. Yusuf and Gedi continue to maintain that their strategy is to contain the warlords, but how this will be accomplished remains unclear. It is also possible that the Ethiopian and TFG agenda will now begin to diverge. Ethiopia may see less interest in promoting a stable, unified national government for Somalia, its traditional regional opponent. Besides, they already have close ties with and ways to influence the warlords so there is a disincentive to weakening the allies. The TFG, and Yusuf in particular, have an interest in ensuring security through a stable, at least somewhat inclusive, national government. The Courts won the hearts of much of Mogadishu and southern Somalia for a time when they curbed the violent lawlessness of the warlords. The TFG can earn credit from Somalis by preventing a return to the violence and extortion they brought.

¶5. (C) We continue to hear complaints from a range of non-governmental representatives that the significant groups they represent are not being consulted by the TFG. While some of this constitutes special pleading in an effort to draw us in as an advocate for their roles, there also appears to be some legitimacy in these complaints. We continue to deliver a strong message to the TFG leadership and to these groups that they must talk directly and work together, regardless of what mutual suspicions they may harbor based on past history and personality conflicts. We are working to be a catalyst for such discussions. We are emphasizing to all those with whom we are in contact that they should view the current situation as an evolving process. Quick fixes on issues related to dialogue and warlords should not be expected. There can be no preconditions for dialogue. Those interested in building a stable and democratic Somalia need

NAIROBI 00000023 002 OF 002

to engage now, however imperfect the environment may be, in order to influence the process underway.

¶6. (C) At our suggestion, TFG Parliament Speaker Hassan indicated he is prepared to meet with President Yusuf. However, Yusuf has refused to meet with him. Hassan is trying to establish contact with Islamic Courts, moderates, particularly Sheikh Sharif, and we have indicated that we are willing to engage if they renounce violence and terrorism, and commit to work to build stability in Somalia based on the TFG Charter and TFIs.

¶7. (C) As we work to encourage dialogue, tensions are high. The weapons collection program set to begin in Mogadishu January 2 has raised tensions even higher. The price of weapons in Mogadishu has sky-rocketed. The perception (right or wrong) among some Somalis that the TFG is reinstalling warlords is casting a shadow over efforts to promote dialogue by contributing to skepticism about TFG intentions. Much of the negative perception is focused on Prime Minister Gedi, who is regarded as maneuvering to preserve his role by any and all means. According to one unconfirmed report, Gedi has placed a close family member as head of the port and is working in the Hiran district to undermine appointments made by Yusuf that Gedi is unhappy with.

¶8. (C) We have heard very positive feedback on the U.S. statement issued on December 7 because it touched on three issues of concern to many Somalis: support for dialogue and a broad-based government; interest in not seeing a return to warlordism; and the desire to implement UNSC 1725, thus facilitating the departure of Ethiopian forces. At this point, it is fair to state that U.S. influence, publicly and privately, is being felt strongly among a broad range of Somalis and that this is welcomed as positive.

¶9. (C) As the TFG moves to consolidate control, it has appealed for U.S. assistance (reftel H reports text of a January 3 letter from President Yusuf to President Bush requesting assistance). The TFG needs help in virtually

every area. USAID is conducting an emergency assessment of needs and we should have some preliminary findings by January 18. In general terms, the needs range from capacity-building for governance and financial management to training for security forces. While the TFG will need direct assistance, expanding assistance to strengthen civil society will have a very positive impact on the evolving situation. Putting forth specific commitments to provide assistance will enhance U.S. influence and leverage. Septel recommended rapid action to approve a pending section 1207 request. We are developing thoughts on ways to engage in support of training for TFG security forces, including in conjunction with the Kenyans.

¶10. (C) While working the Somali internal dynamics, it will be important to engage with key countries to help complement our efforts. The Arab League, Egypt, Yemen, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia can potentially be helpful in influencing whatever moderate remnants of the Courts that may emerge and to dampen any residual support for the Courts, as well as influencing other figures such as TFG Speaker Hassan. Support from the EC will be needed to help fund the African force for Somalia. We have urged the TFG to weigh in directly with the EC and member states on the need to provide such support. The TFG is reaching out to a range of African countries to urge that they provide forces. They place special emphasis on Uganda South Africa and Nigeria. The TFG understands the importance of bringing about the quick exit of Ethiopian forces, who are widely received negatively by Somalis. The TFG realizes that introducing a broader African force will bolster their legitimacy and prospects for peace and stability.

¶11. (C) The visit of Assistant Secretary Frazer and the Contact Group meeting set for January 5 are well-timed to press our objectives and to help coalesce a coordinated international response. The Kenyans want to work closely with us on all fronts--diplomatic, security, and assistance. They remain head of IGAD though March. The contact Group meeting will provide an early opportunity to sound out others on their plans to assist and engage the TFG.

RANNEBERGER